

CHANGING DESIGNATION OF SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FIVE  
CIVILIZED TRIBES TO THAT OF THIRD ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
THE INTERIOR.

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DECEMBER 21, 1920.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state  
of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. HASTINGS, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the  
following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 15159.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 15159) changing the designation of the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes to that of Third Assistant Secretary of the Interior, defining his duties, and for other purposes, have carefully considered same and report the bill back without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The first section of the bill changes the designation of the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma to that of Third Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and in addition to conferring all the duties now conferred by existing law or by the rules and regulations of the Secretary of the Interior upon the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, authority is given, with the right of appeal to the Secretary of the Interior, to approve or disapprove all uncontested oil and gas leases made by individual restricted Indian allottees who are members of the Five Civilized Tribes.

The second section gives the Third Assistant Secretary of the Interior general supervision over all Indian tribes, Indian schools, and Indian agencies in the State of Oklahoma.

A subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, consisting of nine members, visited Oklahoma in May, 1920, and made an extended investigation of Indian affairs in the State of Oklahoma. The committee went thoroughly into the workings of the office of the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, and as a result made the following recommendation:

Consolidate the work at the Indian office at Muskogee and discontinue all work at the Washington Indian Office, which is in duplication of the work done at the Muskogee office. An Assistant Secretary of the Interior should be stationed at Muskogee. A consolidation of this character would eliminate 95 per cent of the work that is done in the Washington office pertaining to the Five Civilized Tribes. This is not only in the interest of economy from a governmental standpoint, but it will greatly expedite the handling of affairs and be of great benefit to the people doing business with the Muskogee office, which will thus resolve itself into much greater profit for the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes.

This bill is drawn to meet the above recommendation of the full committee to which the subcommittee that made the investigation reported.

It was found that the office force at Muskogee consisted of 145 employees and an additional force of 118 employees were engaged in field work. The committee found that it was a duplication of work for the Muskogee office to make investigations and report to the Washington office many things that the Muskogee office can more competently pass upon and take final action. In the judgment of the committee, there is no reason why oil and gas leases should be forwarded to Washington for approval, when it is known that it causes much delay. The Washington office has no additional information aside from that contained in the record.

Provision is made for an appeal in contested matters. Certainly there is no reason why uncontested oil and gas leases should not be finally passed upon in the Muskogee office.

The report of the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes for the year ending June 30, 1920 (pp. 34-35) shows that during such fiscal year 9,482 letters were received from the department and 6,536 letters were mailed to the department. The preparation of these letters and reports requires a large clerical force. Great delay is experienced in having many of these matters finally passed upon.

They can better be passed upon in the local office at Muskogee, where much valuable and personal information and reference may be had to records, maps, and reports on all kinds.

The report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (p. 30) shows that during the past fiscal year 3,500 oil and gas mining leases of restricted Indians and 1,700 assignments, making a total of 5,200 instruments, were forwarded from the superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes to the Secretary of the Interior for approval. This accounts for much of the correspondence and duplication of work.

It will be noted that supervision is not taken off the approval of oil and gas leases, but that supervision is continued under a Federal officer located at Muskogee, Okla., who is designated as the Third Assistant Secretary of the Interior. As a matter of fact, it is generally known that the Secretary of the Interior does not give these details his personal supervision and that the approval of these leases and other matters forwarded from the Muskogee office is made by an Assistant Secretary, unless in certain special cases where appeals are taken to the Secretary of the Interior and his personal attention is invited to them; which appeals are permitted under the present bill.

There are a large number of other Indian tribes in Oklahoma, aggregating about ten or twelve thousand Indians, and the committee is of the opinion that all of these tribes might well be brought under the general supervision of the Third Assistant Secretary of the Interior, located at Muskogee, Okla., rather than have such official perform these duties in the Washington office. It is believed that such action in the next year or two will result in greatly reducing the clerical force in both the office at Muskogee and in the Indian Bureau in Washington. It will be a saving to the Government, result in more efficient service and expedite the winding up of the affairs of the Five Civilized Tribes, as well as the affairs of the other Indian Tribes in Oklahoma.

Your committee recommend that the bill be passed.